



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS**  
*COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS*

VANCOUVER  
Public Meeting Minutes  
July 10, 2004

**Roll Call:**

Commissioners present: Diana Avalos, Faviola Barbosa, Yvonne Lopez-Morton, Gabriel Portugal, Homero Tamez, and Rebecca Villareal

Commissioners absent: Gabriel Banfi (excused), Leo Gaeta (excused), and Karla Padilla-Reyna (excused).

Staff present: Uriel Iñiguez and Cindy García

Meeting called to order at 9:15 a.m.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Commissioner Portugal made a motion to approve the minutes from the Spokane public meeting. Commissioner Barbosa seconded the motion. **Minutes approved unanimously.**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

In the last public meeting there was discussion about changing the Joint Commission meeting from January to November or December. Possible date changes discussed at study session meeting. Commissioner Barbosa made a motion to schedule Joint Commission Meeting on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Commissioner Portugal seconded the motion. **Motion approved unanimously.**

**Action item:** Acting Executive Director and Executive Assistant will arrange Legislative Reception.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Each year the Commission sets legislative priorities. Commissioner Portugal made a motion to support the following:

- House Bill 2708 which establishes conditional scholarships for bilingual students,
- House Bill 2195 retakes on the WASL test,

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- House Bill 3029 Matricula Consular,
- House Bill 2863 require state agencies to provide signs in the language of the community they are addressing,
- Senate Bill 6268 allowing race and/or ethnicity for college/university admission,
- Senate Bill 6599 monitoring cholinesterase (pesticide testing)

In addition the Commission will continue to support Immigration reform. Commissioner Tamez seconded the motion. **Motion approved unanimously.**

**Action Item:** Acting Executive Director Iñiguez and Executive Assistant will draft the Legislative Priorities on letterhead by the September public meeting.

Commissioner Tamez recommended that the Commission provide a press release on the immigration sweeps that have caused stress and chaos in the Latino community.

Commissioner Tamez read a rough draft of a press release he wrote, addressing the concerns of the community (addendum 1). Commissioner Portugal indicated that the allegations of the immigration sweeps came up very quickly and as a Commission we had not been able to issue a statement. Commissioner Portugal seconded the motion to review and edit the press release. **Motion approved unanimously.**

**Action Item:** Commissioners will be sent a copy of the press release written by Commissioner Tamez, via email, for editing. After edits are made, staff will have press release translated and will send to all media contacts.

### **GUEST SPEAKERS:**

**Chief Brian J. Martinex** – Vancouver City Police

Chief Martinex spoke about the demographics of the City of Vancouver. The population of the city of Vancouver is 151,000 people. According to the 2000 Census 2.5% of the population is African American, 4.5% is Asian, and 5% of the population is Hispanic.

Chief Martinex spoke about the need to diversify the police force. In order to fully diversify the police force, perceptions need to be changed. The Hispanic community perceives the police force a certain way, just as the police force may perceive the Hispanic community differently. To eliminate perceptions recruitment of diversified candidates needs to occur. Recruiting efforts are being looked at by a recruitment team, which has developed a diversity management plan for hiring. The recruitment team has developed three goals for recruiting – 1) emphasize the recruitment of female and diverse police applicants, 2) further diversify police workforce and 3) utilize the community as a recruitment agent.

Q: Commissioner Portugal asked what challenges Chief Martinex sees when working with the Hispanic community.

A: The challenge is getting into the community, getting the community to listen to the message, getting the community to a place where discussion can occur about who the

police force really is. It's not just the Hispanic community we have trouble connecting with. Perceptions tend to get in the way of making the connection.

**Commander Mary White** – Vancouver City Police

Has been with the Vancouver Police Department for 20 years. Commander White stated that what the police department really needs from the minority communities are young people who are interested in law enforcement and who are ready to make that challenge. When someone from within the police force is the same sex, gender, race or ethnicity it's easier to relate/communicate with that police officer. Recruitment campaign is very aggressive to bring in more women and minorities.

Commander White spoke of the language barrier and challenges this presents. There are not enough officers who speak Spanish or any other language. Currently working with community college to try to put together different types of classes to help officers learn different languages.

Q: Commissioner Villareal asked how the Police Department is actively recruiting minorities and people who speak other languages?

A: Commander White stated she was going to let Sergeant Delgado answer that question.

**Sergeant George Delgado** – Vancouver City Police

Sergeant Delgado spoke about recruiting efforts. Stated that in order for recruitment efforts to work a few things need to happen first. Racism stigma, on both sides, needs to be erased and understand that diversity is a label. There is a difference between the Latino that was born in the United States and the Latino that is an immigrant; they have different needs. Recognize that recruitment should start when kids are little. Sergeant Delgado also stated that language is important. Participation needs to occur in the Latino community. That's where the recruitment team comes in. Recruitment team participates in community outreach; they sit in on community events such as high school graduations, fairs, celebrations, swearing in of new US citizens, and other community events upon request. At these events the recruitment team talks to the community about things that are non-business (non-police) related to establish a connection.

Q: Chair Lopez-Morton asked what the testing procedure is.

A: Currently reviewing the testing process. Concentrating on how people from different cultures test, the police force realizes that is an important component to testing.

Chief Martinez added that there is a systematic problem with law enforcement testing. Testing system has become outdated and bureaucratic. Concerns exist that current testing system discourages potential candidates. It can take up to one year from the time a qualified candidate goes through the testing procedure to the time they are hired.

Chief Martinex also stated that the police department is putting out the diversity philosophy in many different languages on their website, on Hispanic news papers and/or radio stations.

Chief Martinex sent two messages to go to the governors office, requested support for children's division (law enforcement) funding because cuts to those programs affect all communities. Other recommendation is to continue to bring this forum down to Vancouver more often.

**Lorne Sanford** – Labor and Industries (L&I), Acting Regional Director, Region 4

Mr. Sanford stated that they are currently looking at new ways to do business. Five priorities have been established:

- Early return to work – trying to make sure that injured workers return to work much more quickly. On average it takes about 270 days for workers to go back to original employment or something else. Focusing on trying to make sure that within 14 days after notification of injury is received, the employee has talked to someone from L&I, to make sure both the employer and employee know L&I is aware of that injury.
- Detecting fraud abuse – Dealing with employers and employees that are abusing the system. Part of the underground economy, where employers/employees are not paying into the L&I system and by doing that they are able to operate with fewer cots. Individuals, who are injured, continue to take advantage of the system by continuing to get money from the compensation system rather than getting back to the work force.
- Prevention – trying to make sure that there is a proactive approach on teaching employers what type of injuries are occurring in their place of business. For example, in a packing plant they are aware of the type of things that are causing injuries and also making sure they are educating employers and employees of the safety elements.
- Putting a face on L&I – getting out more into the community and let the community know what L&I is doing that we are trying to make a difference in everybody's life in the different industries that are in the state of Washington.
- Operating industrial insurance program better – improving the handling of claims is a very major role in L&I. There have been times in the past where response to the public needs has not been as quickly as possible. Trying to improve the way business is done.
- Low wage initiative –low wage defined as those individuals who make anything less than \$11 an hour in the state of Washington. For King County \$13 an hour. Individuals that make less than this amount of money are taken advantage of. Educating employers and employees what type of things they are entitled to.

Mr. Sanford stated that L&I is aggressively recruiting bilingual employees to make sure there is appropriate outreach and the right demographics in the community to make sure we can interact and serve. Trying to make sure there is customer service specialist at the

front counter that speaks the language the customer is more comfortable communicating in.

Q: Commissioner Villareal asked what other languages were available.

A: English, Spanish and Russian.

Mr. Sanford closed by stating that L&I is aware of the issues that are out there and that affect the community. L&I is seeking ways to get more information to reach out to the community and to find ways to utilize professionals that are able to help employers and employees throughout the state.

Q: Commissioner Tamez stated that one of the biggest issues with injured workers that are working with brush sub contractors is wage an hour. Wage an hour is also part of workers compensation, often times these individuals don't get paid minimum wage and the employer doesn't seem to mind. When these workers become hurt they do not get compensation at minimum wage because L&I does not have a policy. Is L&I working on a policy for that? Why can't L&I go after sub contractors that don't pay premiums?

A: That is one of the disadvantages of the wage an hour laws. Cannot enforce that employer to pay that money to that individual. Putting together proposed legislation to allow more power to capture that money from that employer.

Q: Commissioner Portugal asked about training before workers go into the job site. Hispanics seem to be having those problems. Is L&I involved in anything to help with training workers?

A: Yes. One of the services Washington L&I has is the Industrial Safe and Health Act, the equivalent to OSHA. Within the program there are consultation and compliance services. Consultation services are available to employers so they can have a professional safety and health individual come out and do presentations and the different training tools that are available in the program.

Q: Commissioner Portugal asked if Mr. Sanford to explain how the training can occur.

A: Employer can call L&I and ask about it, they do set up certain dates they have a catalog that gets mailed out to different employers about specific classes and training items that occur on service locations.

Jose Rodriguez added that the program is in its pilot stage. Trying to work with Workfirst, Casa Latina and other referral offices getting workers into jobs. A lot of the jobs are day jobs where there will be a minimum amount of training. What L&I is doing, for example, when Workforce gives an orientation, L&I will also attend to do training. If it works well in Seattle, it will be spread out.

**Claudia Arana:** Office of Senator Maria Cantwell

Ms. Arana started by explaining the different of immigration enforcement as opposed to Homeland Security. Before March 2003, there was Immigration & Naturalization Services (INS), with advent of Homeland Security, INS divided into three different organizations, Customs & Border, Immigration, and Immigration and Citizenship, Border Protection, and ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). ICE is responsible for detention and removal. When undocumented immigrants are apprehended that is where the immigrant will go before they go to court or are deported.

There has been a flurry of concern regarding recent activity with ICE in Eastern Washington. There have been several rumors of raids being conducted and 200 people being detained in Othello. Senator Cantwell's office has been trying to speak to ICE to going on. Trying to find out if there was a sweep targeting a specific group of people. Ms. Arana spoke to George Borrones, up until Friday was the Director of ICE. Mr. Borrones stated to Ms. Arana that there were non-raids or sweeps being conducted in Eastern Washington. There were criminal immigrants in Eastern Washington and there were warrants out for their arrests. Fugitive Operation Unit had never been to Eastern Washington so some of the activity may have been unusual and spurred concern. There have been no unusual numbers of detentions in Washington State. There is concern about what ICE is stating and what the community is saying.

Q: Commissioner Portugal asked about rumors that clear information would not be given because the Homeland Security Act (Patriot Act) comes into play. Can ICE withhold information if they choose to?

A: Ms. Arana stated she had not heard that.

**Noemi Estrada-Suro** – Teacher and Activist

Immigrated in 1973 to Vancouver, WA. Received a BA in education from University of Portland, graduated in 1992. Started *El Pulso Hispano* newspaper. Could not obtain a teaching assignment in Vancouver School District and was told that she would never get a teaching job at Vancouver School District because of advocating for the Hispanic community. Ms. Estrada-Suro spoke about parents coming to her complaining of abuses in schools against Hispanic children. For example, students have to wear a badge that identifies them as students. A security guard would tear up Hispanic students tags and ask where the name tags were, when student could not come up with the tag, student would be sent to the police department.

Q: Chair Lopez-Morton asked if there are any tutoring programs for Hispanic students.

Commissioner Avalos responded that she has been an employee for Vancouver Public Schools for five years. The public schools offer an array of services, after school tutoring programs, ESL classes; there are also ELL (English Language Learner) magnet sites. Recruitment efforts have started for bilingual/bicultural teachers/assistants.

**Cheryl Hanks** – Nurse in Pesticide Surveillance Program, Washington State Department of Health

Cholinesterase monitoring is continuing. Re-testing is being done due to the results of four people being erroneous. State Department of Health is currently looking at pesticide review done in Toronto. Started with 1,600-pesticide research projects, reviewed them, set up high quality standards to what makes a good pesticide project and narrowed it down to 40 good projects.

**Susan Shelton** – State Department of Health (Food Safety)

Ms. Shelton spoke about educating in regards to food safety. Goal in Washington State is to do all food training the same, as all counties do food training differently. There are a lot of challenges with food safety, as a lot of things are done differently because of cultural differences. Trying to cross the regulations to make it culturally relevant for everyone.

Q: Commissioner Portugal asked about the candy that has a lot of chewing powder it has lead in the chile powder, what kind of information do you have on that?

A: Ms. Shelton responded that in the Tri-Cities they had found lead tainted candy. It can come from the chile or the actual fruit the tamarindo. Packaging requirements are different. Many times orange coloring in packages is often lead. In this case it was coming from the packaging.

Meeting adjourned at 12:07 p.m.